

SESE — SCIENCE, HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY · 4TH–6TH CLASS

Na Portaigh — Irish Boglands

Integrated SESE Unit — 4th–6th Class

Bogland science

1

Peatland / bogland

A wetland ecosystem where waterlogged, acidic conditions prevent the complete decomposition of plant material. Dead vegetation accumulates as peat (móin) over thousands of years.

Example: Approximately 20% of Ireland is covered in peatland — more than any other country in Europe

2

Blanket bog

Found in the wet, high-rainfall uplands of the west — Connemara, Mayo, Donegal, Kerry. The bog covers the landscape like a blanket. Up to 10 metres deep. Primary home of the common snipe and golden plover.

3

Raised bog

Found in the lowland midlands — forms in lake basins, growing upward as peat accumulates. The centre is higher than the edges (hence 'raised'). Midland raised bogs were Ireland's main turf source.

4

Carbon sink

Bogs absorb and store CO₂ from the atmosphere as they grow. An intact bog stores more carbon per hectare than a tropical rainforest. Drained bogs release stored carbon — making peatland restoration a key climate action.

5

Sphagnum moss

The dominant plant of most Irish bogs. Highly acidic — this acidity preserves organic material in the bog, including bodies. Sphagnum was used as wound dressing in both World Wars.



gh three SESE lenses

History, Geography, Science in

- SCIENCE: bog ecology — sphagnum moss, sundew (carnivorous plant), bog cotton. Anaerobic decomposition. Carbon storage. Why restoring bogs helps tackle climate change.
- HISTORY: turf-cutting tradition — bán-turf, sleán (the cutting implement), stacking and drying, the smell of a turf fire. Bog bodies — Clonycavan Man, Old Croghan Man (both National Museum, Dublin). Bronze and Iron Age artefacts preserved in peat for 3,000 years.
- GEOGRAPHY: blanket bog (west) vs raised bog (midlands). Bord na Móna's industrial peat extraction and its environmental legacy. Peatland restoration projects — removing drains to rewet bogs.
- ACTIVITY — BOG WATER: filter bog water through sphagnum moss. Measure pH before and after. Discuss why the acidic water preserves organic material.
- ACTIVITY — MAP WORK: locate the main Irish bogland areas on a map of Ireland. Which province has the most? Why (think about rainfall).
- DISCUSSION: should peat harvesting be banned to protect bogs and tackle climate change? What about communities who have relied on turf for generations?

